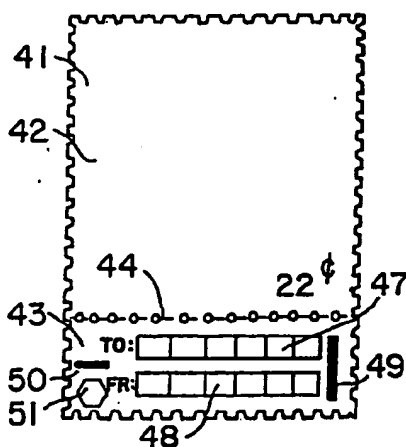




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## (57) Abstract

The invention relates to the fields of postal stamps, automated postal sorter machines, sorting processes, and postal metering devices. The prior art of postal stamps and processing systems failed to provide for automatic sorting and processing without replacing the usual stamp with a machine printed decal thus: 1) depriving the ordinary stamp user from using the system which requires a special stamp printing machine, and 2) destroying the philatelic nature of the stamp for the hobby of stamp collecting. The invention solves these problems by providing a multi-part stamp where machine readable data are entered by the ordinary user without the need for a special machine. One portion of the stamp (42) includes the ordinary stamp attributes thereon and another portion (43) carries marking indicia (47) and (48) which are to be filled with the information of the points of origin and destination. The stamp portions may be separated along lines of perforation, resulting in one piece being the typical unaffected stamp collected by millions of stamp collectors. In addition, automatic postal sorting apparatus, sorting process, and a metering device which all use the new features of the invented stamp are introduced to facilitate the implementation of the automatic sorting of mail.